



2002

Switzerland's radioactive waste management program

Low-level radioactive waste

Switzerland's government and utilities co-founded the National Cooperative for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste (NAGRA) to manage radioactive waste disposal.

Switzerland has several interim storage facilities for low-level radioactive wastes. For a permanent low-level radioactive waste facility, NAGRA plans to develop a horizontally accessed rock cavern to house corrosion-resistant waste containers. Switzerland is studying a multi-barrier approach to waste containment.

Spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste

Spent nuclear fuel is stored for 1-10 years in water pools at Swiss reactors. An industry-owned organization, ZWILAG, built and operates Switzerland's centralized interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel, high-level radioactive waste, conditioning low-level radioactive waste, and for incinerating wastes. Other interim storage facilities predating ZWILAG continue to operate in Switzerland.

Reprocessing spent nuclear fuel

Switzerland contracts for reprocessing its spent nuclear fuel in France and the United Kingdom.

Transporting radioactive waste

Radioactive waste has been transported within the country in a variety of casks. Transport of spent nuclear fuel to reprocessing centers has taken place since the early 1970s.

Deep geologic disposal plans

For permanent high-level radioactive waste and long-lived low-level radioactive waste disposal, two host rock repository options are under consideration by the Swiss: a deep repository in crystalline rock and the Opalinus clay. Candidate sites for exploration should be recommended to the government by 2002. Although study of a site in the Opalinus clay began in 1999, construction of a repository is not foreseen until well into this century.



U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management

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DOE/YMP-0417
June 2001



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